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ON AMERICAN BOOKS

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ON AMERICAN BOOKS

Edited by

FRANCIS HACKETT

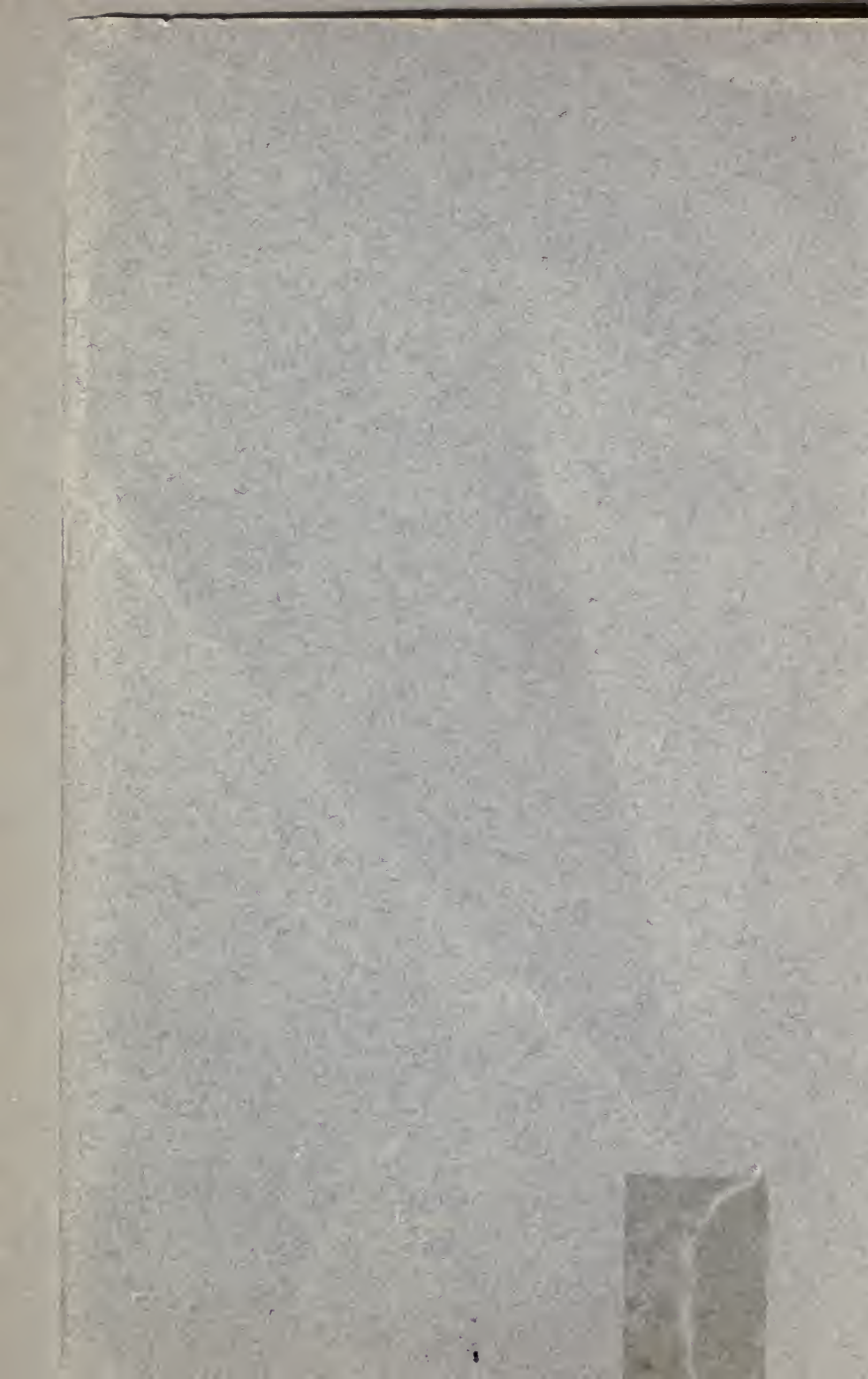
A symposium by five American critics
as printed in the London *Nation*



NEW YORK

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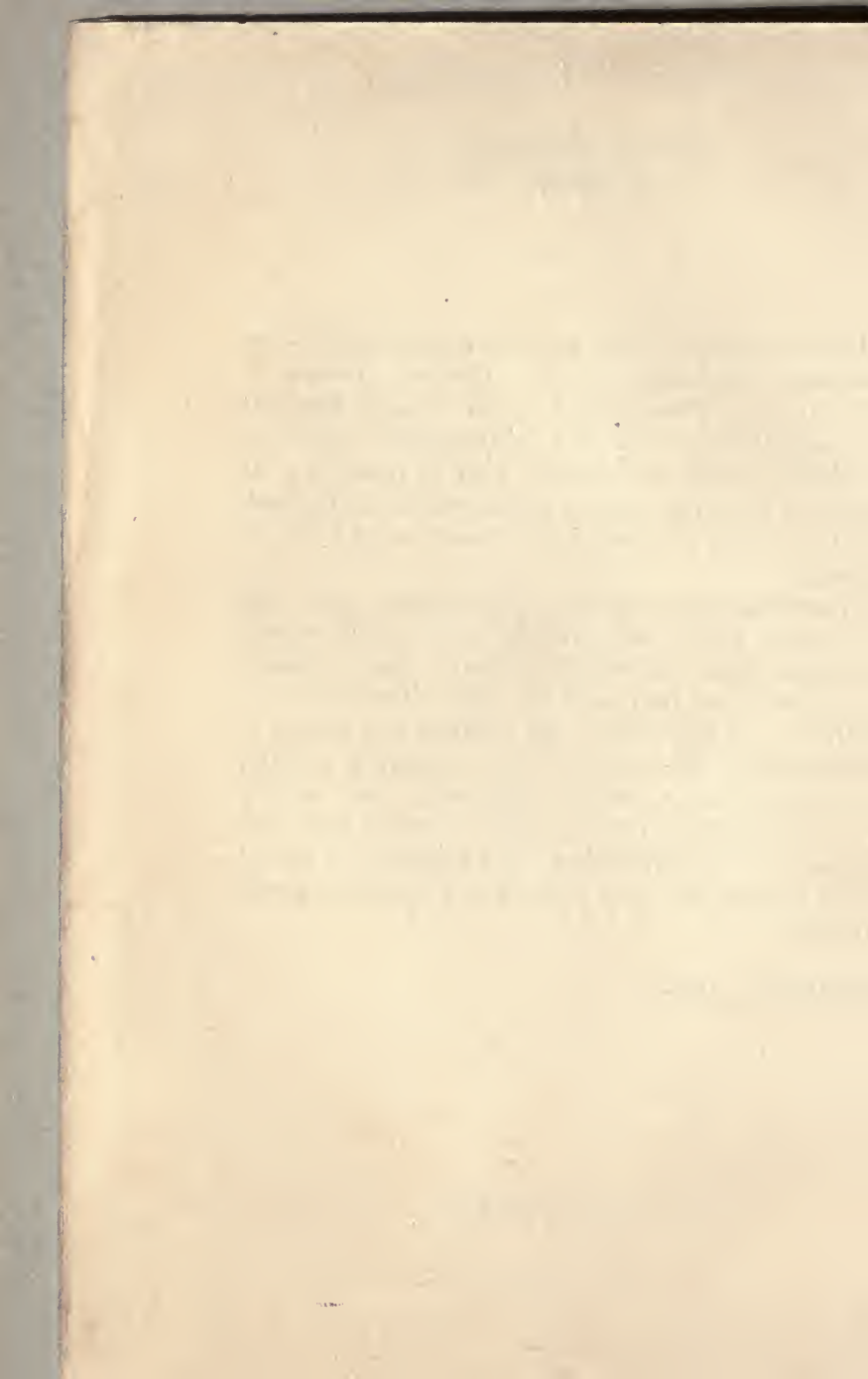
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The contents of this pamphlet appeared as an American supplement to the London *Nation* in April, 1920. It was edited by Mr. Francis Hackett after conversation with Mr. Massingham, editor of the *Nation*, during the latter's visit to America. It seemed to both men that a presentation to the British of the state of letters in America would not be untimely.

By arrangement with Mr. Massingham, and with the consent of the authors who were good enough to restore their respective articles to their original form, Americans may now see their literature as in a mirror. In fairness to the writers, the reader is reminded that these papers were prepared quickly, for purposes of a weekly publication and with a view to stimulating interest rather than to give final judgments. As artists they were reluctant to assent to this reprint, but they yielded to persuasion good-naturedly.

September, 1920.



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American Criticism To-Day

AN American swashbuckler of letters has described what is probably the Englishman's view of American criticism. "The typical literary product of the country," he says, "is still a refined essay in the *Atlantic Monthly*, by Emerson, so to speak, out of Charles Lamb, the sort of thing one might look to be done by a somewhat advanced English curate." And if Englishmen go to the *Atlantic Monthly* and similar journals for America's outlook on life or letters, that is the sort of thing they will often find.

Only too much of American criticism is still of this character — the work of men escaping from difficulties by the half-hearted methods of reasonable compromise that serve well enough in politics, but fail in the arts, where all depends on what Keats called a "fine excess," even when the excess is that compression and restraint which, according to Goethe, proves the master. Creative work of real power, with the real tang and gusto of American life, reaches Europe often enough, but only critics of the most thin, timid, and derivative type seem able to find any, even if a rather condescending, audience, in England.

In America of late the critics have more than willingly grouped themselves according to the standards of Old and New. On the surface the point at issue

sometimes seems almost a question of geography: Does the Muse prefer the climate of New England or the Middle West? Is it Pegasus, or a screech owl, that is now hovering over Chicago? But at bottom it is the old problem of the literary influence of Europe, and how far the new America is to cut loose from the older and more derivative literature of New England. It is not wholly a new question, for it has mildly agitated men's minds ever since the Declaration of Independence, and over seventy years ago, in the jingling rhymes of his "Fable for Critics," Lowell stated some of its aspects clearly enough.

The older critics of to-day, those who have for some time spoken with the most authority, have scarcely concerned themselves with this problem. They have conceived of themselves as citizens of a Republic of Letters in which geographical boundaries seemed almost literary accidents. They have defined these boundaries often enough, but without any personal sense of their relation to them. Mr. Brownell, whether in "French Traits" or "American Prose Masters," is alike carrying on the traditions of the best French criticism, with its modeled phrases and its clearness of architectonic, though with less of its clearness in the substance of his thought. Mr. Woodberry, in "The Heart of Man," "The Torch," and "Masters of Literature," is an inheritor of the Lowell tradition, in whom, despite many new influences, New England idealism carries on its appointed task of illuminating the meeting-point of art and life. His biographies of Emerson and Hawthorne have few equals among the briefer

histories of literary lives; and the best of his essays on the great writers have a unity and lift that make many of Lowell's seem those of a shrewd but old-fashioned amateur. Mr. Huneker, in "Iconoclasts" and "Egoists," is the irresponsible *dilettante*, for whom all the arts are an equal obsession, with a curiosity and *flair* for what is really distinctive wherever he may find it, but with much of Remy de Gourmont's interest in not obviously essential detail. But perhaps least "American" of all to an Englishman (for Englishmen have a very special conception of what an American should be) will appear Professor Santayana's "Interpretations of Poetry and Religion" and "Three Religious Poets," the work of a Harvard philosopher for whom criticism has been merely an incident in a remarkable career, and who writes always with a high-bred and subtle distinction not unlike Cardinal Newman's. Whether he is concerned with Lucretius or Dante, Shakespeare or Goethe, he has Newman's gift of at once illuminating and yet obscuring his subject. He broods with delicate pleasure and a keen mind over these greatest of writers; but the work of more modern men — men no more modern than Whitman and Browning — seems to him the "poetry of barbarism."

There are younger critics who agree with him in this verdict — if all men short of forty may be called young — but none who can state it with the same serenity and detachment. For, like all men who espouse a cause and marshal all their forces in the struggle, they take on the color of the gladiator and the controversialist. The critics of to-day, like

the critics of the age of Boileau or the Romantic Movement, feel forced, willy nilly, to take sides. The new age and the new literature are facts, overwhelming facts, and everyone appears to think that he must be for them or against them.

In the first place, there are the academic pessimists, among whom the best known are Paul Elmer More and Professor Irving Babbitt. Under the literary editorship of Mr. More, the *New York Nation* continued to be (what it had been for years) the organ of America's best scholarship, and became, in addition, the high citadel of critical conservatism. The ten or more volumes of his "Shelburne Essays," made up largely of his *Nation* articles, represent the high-water mark of American reaction. One after another the writers of the modern world are (to use a phrase of his own) "stretched on the rack of a harsh ethical theory." Professor Babbitt's interest is still less predominantly literary; literature or criticism as an art seems scarcely to exist for him; he lives in a world of abstractions in which poems and novels serve merely as documents in the history of culture. The books in which he has presented this reaction in systematic form, "The New Laokoön," the "Masters of Modern French Criticism," and "Rousseau and Romanticism," seem pathetic illustrations of misused power. For these men have the learning and culture of the best academic critics of France; but what avails their petulant erudition if it serves no other purpose than to whine over the irrevocable past and to sneer at the aspirations of modern men? To have a new and original theory of the arts is for them "to part

company with Plato and Aristotle, and prove the Greeks incompetent in matters of beauty"! Romanticism and the romantic temperament are their special aversions. Why do these men harp on this subject with an irritating iteration? Why does the parvenu harp incessantly on the bad manners of those about him? These men are themselves Romanticists, with the romantic distaste for reality, the romantic yearning for an imaginary past; they are lashing their own hated weaknesses when they seem to be lashing the world about them. Here are the sad stigmata of the sterile soul.

In the second place, there are the modernists. They have this in common, that they believe all earlier American literature, except Walt Whitman (and possibly Emerson and Poe), *vieux jeu* and irretrievably bad. They also seem to agree that there are no good critics in America. The ground for these beliefs is that there has been too much mimicry of Europe, too little concentration on our own life and art. Most of them (though to this the little London-born circle of American Imagists is an exception) seem to think that an American writer should deal only with American life, and more particularly with contemporary American life. In this they are merely reviving some of the oldest illusions of criticism — that the critic can determine in advance the subjects of creative artists, that some subjects are good material and others bad, and that any subject can be made other than a theme of contemporary life by the living poet. One who served in the Great War may say without misunderstanding that patriotism is a political and not an artistic ideal.

But what may be without foundation for any reasoned æsthetic theory may for the historic moment be good practical advice. An older America did need liberation from the long serfdom to Europe and the mere parrot-like acceptance and reiteration of her ideals and verdicts. There is no real disparity between the demand that what has been crude and raucous in American criticism needs more culture, and the demand that American criticism should cease to be derivative and mimetic; for what may be needed after all is one of the finest products of culture, a true and original independence of judgment and taste.

So independence, even in its transitional stage of irritable revolt, deserved a welcome. This "new freedom" has been furthered by many journals, by many newspapers and reviews — *Reedy's Mirror*, the *Little Review*, the *Dial*, the various poetry magazines, Braithwaite's annual reviews of poetry in the *Boston Transcript* and elsewhere, the short-lived *Seven Arts*, the *New Republic* under Francis Hackett (himself one of the keenest and most delightful of our reviewers), and the literary supplements of some of the daily newspapers, among which Llewellyn Jones's in the *Chicago Evening Post* has in this respect been a pioneer. The general average of American reviewing is still deplorable, as the author of any new book learns only too soon; but we have at least reached the stage, thank heaven, where every book worth while is sure of some comment that goes to the very heart of the subject.

Our modernists, then, are for the most part in-

spirited by the sense of change and controversy. They have the American feeling that things *can* be changed, and literature as easily as a political system. They are chiefly concerned with problems of practical wisdom; they skim lightly over the deep sea of æsthetic thought; indeed, they all suffer from want of brooding over the meaning of art. Thus Van Wyck Brooks, in his earlier books, preached a Middle Western theory of the new freedom (picture to yourself young America writing Matthew Arnold's theories of literature as a "criticism of life" into the literary platform of the Progressive Party!); and something of the same extra-literary pre-occupation, with a new psychological twist, reappears in his brilliant and remarkable study of Mark Twain, which gives Mr. Brooks a place of distinction in American criticism. The most raucous and the most untameable is H. L. Mencken. He uses a vernacular which Englishmen will recognize as "American," and his thought has some of the raciness of his own vernacular. Read his book on the "American Language," a veritable encyclopædia of native idioms, and consider its challenge: American speech is no longer to be regarded as subject to British opinion, or even as a joint heritage of the English-speaking world, but as a new and wonderful thing whose growth is to be entrusted to the central authority of America only, to remake as French or Italian remade its ancestral Latin, if need be. Or read his "Prefaces" and "Prejudices," full of a vitality and a verve that make one forget lapses of taste and "smart Aleck" wit; here at least is none of that thin anæmic hesitancy that has

been the earmark of the "best critics" of America's past. His criticism has some of the virtues of the surgeon's knife. He is undisciplined, even vulgar, but keen with the love of literature and fearless of what is new and unapproved.

Finally, there are the apologists and interpreters of the "new poetry," the creators of a theory of an "American Renaissance," including among many others Amy Lowell and Louis Untermeyer, he with the shrewdness and wit of Manhattan, she with the self-assurance of Brahmin New England. Mr. Untermeyer's "New Era in American Poetry" is intelligent, sympathetic, often brilliant, with an eye and ear for every new singer, however uncertain may be his voice. It interprets the surface of things with a remarkable shrewdness; but as a reprint of occasional reviews it foregoes the effort of transmuting the snap judgments of journalism into the considered and rounded judgments of literature, as if the kaleidoscope were the fore-ordained instrument of criticism. Miss Lowell has a "theory of poetry"; it, too, is concerned with the surface of things, with the practical problems of meter, metaphor, the choice of words and subjects, and other matters in which America may have needed her keen admonition and instruction. But her greatest service to criticism has been in interpreting contemporary poets. In her "Six French Poets" and her "Tendencies of Modern American Poetry" she does not dissipate her forces over the whole field, but with masculine directness and energy she selects her subjects from among the proved, the unproved, and the unapproved; and daring to deal with the latest poet

as if he (or sometimes she) were a classic, compels attention by a certain naïve sincerity, and almost persuades us at times that hillocks are mountains, and geese, swans.

In the field of dramatic criticism, Ludwig Lewisohn of the *Nation* and Francis Hackett of the *New Republic* tower above their fellows, and seem almost the harbingers of a new school. With them we say farewell to the old mumblejumble about "dramatic technique," "dramaturgic skill," and the "theory of the theater," which for a generation has served our critics both as an excuse for not thinking and as a ground for accepting the sorriest plays. Here at least are a new spirit and a new approach; a play ceases to be a product of special machine-made rules, and becomes a work of art, to be judged by the standards common to all such works. Mr. Lewisohn is one of the few critics in America for whom learning and a wide culture have served, not as a shackle, but as a ladder and a liberation.

The English reader of this roll-call of critics may ask: Have any of these critics interpreted a single writer with the touch of a master, or added a single æsthetic idea to the sum total of our knowledge of the meaning of art? Perhaps the English reader may find an answer by asking the same question concerning the critics of his own country to-day. The Victorian poet who said that "good critics are rarer than good authors" was right. To feel deeply and yet to think profoundly, to know much and yet to write well—it is no easy staircase that the great critic has to climb.

It may be too much to ask of our critics that they shall have a rounded æsthetic theory, though the greatest criticism has most often proceeded from philosophical minds. It may be too much to ask of our critics that they shall be creative artists, though the greatest modern critics have conceived of their work as in the nature of an æsthetic creation. It may be too much to ask of our critics that they shall possess a rounded scholarship, though the greatest critics have possessed a wide and disciplined culture. But to ask that the moment's mood shall give way to a deeper brooding on the meaning of beauty, that literature be regarded with discreet reverence as an art and not merely as a document in the history of a nation's culture, and, above all, that criticism conceive of itself as sharing somewhat in the art which it interprets, and speak with an independence of judgment and taste worthy of its meaning and purpose — this is not too much to ask, or to hope from, the new America.

J. E. SPINGARN.

Recent American Poetry

THERE was a boy in Springfield, Illinois, who refused to grow up. Others started on their career of being railways presidents and bank presidents and corporation lawyers, but he refused to take on a status. Moreover, he demanded things such as boys in other countries are free of — a folk-lore and a romance of chivalry. He would not have these as transplanted things; he wanted them to be as close to him as the electric sign and the movie hall. They were not given him, and so he began to create them. The stars of the film, Mary Pickford and Mae Marsh, became his Dulcineas and his Unas. And he turned to the people whose speech and gesture had the most flavor of folk-life — the negroes — and out of their story and their extravagant music he made poems that have the quality of myth and folk-lore.

The boy in Springfield was Vachel Lindsay. His great discovery was the four-time measure in poetry — the measure related to rag-time and the negro Jazz music. Gilbert Chesterton has used it to produce a staccato effect in his ballad "Lepanto" —

Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,
Don John of Austria is going to the war,
Stiff flags straining in the night-blasts cold,
In the gloom black-purple, in the glint old-gold.

It was just the measure for a new troubadour to take hold of — a troubadour of the roads streaming with automobiles.

All Vachel Lindsay's effort is to make a heritage of romance for America. And it is not the rootless romance of a Longfellow he would embody, but a romance that will not be aloof from the picture-house and the universal automobile. He himself is the troubadour of his romance, reciting his poems publicly according to a highly-suggestive method he has worked out. He would, he has told us, appeal to the higher vaudeville imagination. But what he brings to that imagination is something profoundly serious and profoundly ethical. He has made for America a romance with most unexpected colors — the blackness of the Congo in his great negro poem; the silks and brocades of China in his poem about the Chinese laundry; the red of fire that is in his "Fireman's Ball," and the glow of the West that is in his "Santa Fé Trail." It is difficult to quote from Lindsay's characteristic poems, for they have the expositions and the climaxes and the stresses of a drama, and in addition they are not free from stage directions. However, I venture to quote a passage from "The Santa Fé Trail."—

This is the order of the music of the morning:—
First, from the far East comes but a crooning;
The crooning turns to a sunrise singing.
Hark to the calm-horn, balm-horn, psalm-horn;
Hark to the faint-horn, quaint-horn, saint-horn. . . .

Hark to the pace-horn, chase-horn, race-horn!
And the holy veil of the dawn has gone,

Swiftly the brazen car comes on.
 It burns in the East as the sunrise burns,
 I see great flashes where the far trail turns.
 Its eyes are lamps like the eyes of dragons.
 It drinks gasoline from big red flagons.
 Butting through the delicate mists of the morning,
 It comes like lightning, goes past roaring.
 It will hail all the wind-mills, taunting, ringing,
 Dodge the cyclones,
 Count the milestones,
 On through the ranges the prairie-dog tills,
 Scooting past the cattle on the thousand hills. . . .
 Ho for the tear-horn, scare-horn, dare-horn,
 Ho for the gay-horn, bark-horn, bay-horn.
 Ho for Kansas, land that restores us
 When houses choke us, and great books bore us!
 Sunrise Kansas, harvester's Kansas,
 A million men have found you before us.

Far away the Rachel-Jane,
 Not defeated by the horns,
 Sings amid a hedge of thorns:
 "Love and life,
 Eternal youth —
 Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!
 Dew and glory,
 Love and truth,
 Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!"

It was in 1913 that Vachel Lindsay published "General Booth Enters Heaven," the first of his poems that had the appeal to the higher vaudeville imagination. That was a few months after the foundation of the Magazine he was published in — *Poetry, a Magazine of Verse*, founded by Miss

Harriet Monroe — herself an excellent poet — with the help of some of the business men of Chicago. In the following year *Poetry* began to publish noteworthy contributions from another Illinois man, Edgar Lee Masters. Mr. Masters was not a youth like Vachel Lindsay; he was an established Chicago lawyer, who, rumor had it, was about to be raised to the bench when his friend William Jennings Bryan discovered that he had unorthodox ideas about the Deity. His contributions to *Poetry* with others added appeared with the plain and irreplaceable title "Spoon River Anthology."

It is a book made up of readings from tombstones of an Illinois village churchyard. Not epitaphs as they were, but as they should have been written. Did Mr. Masters owe his idea to a story of Maupassant's? It mattered not, for he had made the idea his own by the force with which he possessed and expressed it. The result is a book which has done much to carry American poetry away from the Academic, from the Colonial tradition.

Critics might point out that when the "Spoon River Anthology" was praised as poetry some odd commitments were made. Obviously the form he used — the short unrhymed monologue — gave Mr. Masters little trouble after he had written the first score of pieces; there could have been little of the conquest of his material which every poet imposes upon himself. One could reply that the poet was shown in the background created — a background of tragic defeat against which were placed individuals absorbed in the comedy they were playing. Mr. Masters showed himself a poet when he con-

templated the whole of the Spoon River community, and a satirist when he wrote of particular life in it.

"The Spoon River Anthology" is really a terrific satire on American life — on the predatory-Puritan American life. Its fortune is unaccountable. For Americans dislike satire as the boy or girl dislikes it; as those committed to an optimistic philosophy dislike it. And yet here is a satire that attains to the circulation of a best seller. Satire, of course, is not always mockery; satire can be grave and come out of a pitiful heart, and Mr. Masters' satire had the quality of being grave and pitiful.

He has published many volumes since "The Spoon River Anthology"—"Songs and Satires," "Towards The Gulf," "The Great Valley."¹ Many of the important poems in these volumes celebrate the history, the landscape, the personages of "The Great Valley"—the Valley of the Mississippi. Edgar Lee Masters is prodigal in his poetry — satires and hymns to the flesh and studies in personality make up a great bulk of his work. For him Browning's method is still to the good, and a great deal of his poetry is in the form of dramatic monologues. He has indicted men and women, but observe how manfully he can praise a man by that memorable poem of his "Simon surnamed Peter,"—"You were called by Him, Peter, a rock, but we give you the name of Peter the Flame." As an example of Mr. Masters' work when it is at once simple and intense, I quote one of the epitaphs of "The Spoon River Anthology."

¹ Since this was written Mr. Masters has published what is perhaps his most revealing book—"Starved Rock."

ANNE RUTLEDGE

Out of me unworthy and unknown
The vibrations of deathless music;
"With malice toward none, with charity for all."
Out of me the forgiveness of millions towards millions,
And the beneficent face of a nation
Shining with justice and truth.
I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation.
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom.

Abraham Lincoln! He is the figure that the poets
of The Great Valley — Masters, Lindsay, Sandburg
— look to as the shining hero. If we put beside the
above a poem out of Carl Sandburg's "Corn Husk-
ers" we get a significant difference between Edgar
Lee Masters and a Chicago poet who has followed
him in publication. Here is Sandburg's: —

FIRE LOGS

Nancy Hanks dreams by the fire;
Dreams, and the logs sputter,
And the yellow tongues climb.
Red lines lick their way in flickers.
Oh, sputter, logs.
Oh, dream, Nancy.
Time now for a beautiful child.
Time now for a tall man to come.

Masters takes life at the end, and the younger Sand-
burg takes it at the beginning.

There is a wonderful sense of beginnings in Carl

Sandburg's poems. His first book was called "Chicago Poems," and he writes again and again about noises and crowds. But he is essentially a poet of spaces and silences. His poems give us the prairie landscape under its everlasting aspects of spring and winter, summer and fall. And the memory of the Indian dominates his prairie and his prairie-cities. Sandburg has not Whitman's great rhythm, but he has something of the freshness and the abundance of Whitman's great vocabulary. And there is a kinship with earth and sky and water in all he writes. Here is a poem from his second and latest book "Corn Huskers":—

VALLEY SONG

Your eyes and the valley are memories.
 Your eyes fire and the valley a bowl.
 It was here a moonrise crept over the timberline.
 It was here we turned the coffee cups upside down.
 And your eyes and the moon swept the valley.

I will see you again to-morrow.
 I will see you again in a million years.
 I will never know your dark eyes again.
 These are three ghosts I keep.
 These are three sumach-red dogs I run with,

All of it wraps and knots to a riddle:
 I have the moon, the timberline, and you.
 All three are gone — and I keep all three.

So much for the poets of the Great Valley. The poets of New England have their own distinctiveness. They have not, however, the same clear historic beginning, nor that relation of publication

which would let us put them in an historical order. Edwin Arlington Robinson, for instance, was publishing before there was a definitely American movement in poetry. His verse which marks no innovation is very different from the verse of the Middle-Western poets; his outlook is more sophisticated. But his people belong to a definite American *milieu*.

Some writers are born with a feeling for local life, some achieve that feeling, and some everlastingly thrust it upon themselves. Edwin Arlington Robinson belongs to the first company—at all events he parades no discovery of locality. In America too there are decaying cities, and Robinson's books "Captain Craig," "The Town by the River," "The Man Against the Sky" give us the men and women of such places.

Edwin Arlington Robinson is the poet of enigmatic character. He is too, the poet of suspended drama. All his people are characters in a drama of which the climax or the anti-climax has not been reached. Have they passed the worst, or do they face their worst? They do not know, and we are not permitted to guess. Meanwhile they show a defeated life—but yet a life that knowing itself defeated wins to a liberation which makes it a little free and a little triumphant. "We have each a darkening hill to climb," "I'll soon be changing as all do to something I have always been," "The lonely changelessness of dying." These are phrases that show Mr. Robinson's reading of life. He can write to a brave music, but he uses traditional verse-forms, often, I think, to mark a mockery. If I were asked to give his characteristic poem I should quote

"The Poor Relation" from "The Man Against the Sky." These are the last three of the nine stanzas of the poem.—

None live who need fear anything
From her, whose losses are their pleasure;
The plover with a wounded wing
Stays not the flight that others measure;
So there she waits, and while she lives,
And death forgets, and faith forgives,
Her memories go foraging
For bits of childhood song they treasure.

And like a giant harp that hums
On always, and is always blending
The coming of what never comes
With what is past and has an ending,
The city trembles, throbs, and pounds
Outside, and through a thousand sounds
The small intolerable drums
Of Time are like slow drops descending.

Bereft enough to shame a sage
And given little to long sighing,
With no illusion to assuage
The lonely changelessness of dying,—
Unsought, unthought-of, and unheard,
She sings and watches like a bird,
Safe in a comfortable cage
From which there will be no more flying.

If there is in America one poet more than another whose name is a challenge, that poet is Miss Amy Lowell. She is the propagandist of innovation. She is besides a most abundant writer, and again and again she makes in unrhymed and freely-rhythmed verse poems that are undeniably beautiful.

She has had her failures, of course. But with her abundance she can afford to efface them. Not only is she a poet of distinction, but she is a liberating influence on American poetry. The new forms for which she stands are likely to further the production of a distinctive poetic literature for America. These new forms are words in a new declaration of independence. For the American poet of the future may be the child of a Syrian, a Greek, a Swede or a Russian. The traditional rhythm of English verse may not be in his blood, and he may fumble in his poetry if he wishes to use it. But Miss Lowell helps to fling into currency a verse rhythm that he can mould as he pleases. And as he uses it he will not be embarrassed by memories of forgotten dances and disused harp-strings that are in the traditional poetic measures of the British Islands.

Miss Lowell is above everything else a teller of stories — or rather a teller of stories that are attached to stories. She has an extraordinary love — a child's love fortunately retained — for things as things; windmills and balloons, jewels and violins seen as things, pieces of furniture in an old attic. She has named one of her books "Men, Women and Ghosts," but I think a fitter title would have been "Men, Women and Things."

She considers — not always, happily — that her story is bound to an action. Now action with Amy Lowell is certainly a way of spoiling something. It cuts across her imaginative array of things. In one of her poems "The Red Lacquer Music Stand" she shows us a delightful collection of things in an old attic. But then there comes along a boy who wants

to burn a sacrifice on one of the pieces and our whole delighted contemplation is broken short.

I have written about her stories and about her poems about things. But in Miss Lowell's volumes are to be found three or four poems of personal desire that are as intense as anything in American poetry. One of these is "Patterns." Here the story, the character, the things seen, all pass into one thing — a throb of the heart. I want to quote this poem, but it is not possible to quote all of it.—

PATTERNS

I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.
And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills

Flutter in the breeze
 As they please.
 And I weep;
 For the lime-tree is in blossom
 And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

Underneath the fallen blossom
 In my bosom.
 Is a letter I have hid.
 It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the Duke.
 "Madame, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell
 Died in action Thursday se'nnight."
 As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
 The letters squirmed like snakes.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
 Up and down
 The patterned garden-paths
 In my stiff, brocaded gown.
 The squills and daffodils
 Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
 I shall go
 Up and down,
 In my gown.
 Gorgeously arrayed,
 Boned and stayed.
 And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
 By each button, hook, and lace.
 For the man who should loose me is dead,
 Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
 In a pattern called war.
 Christ! What are patterns for?

The poet most obviously of New England is Robert Frost. I remember Robert Frost's once telling me that his poems owed something of their incep-

tion to Virgil — to the “Georgics,” I imagine. It would be curious to trace the likeness between these poems in which conversations are interrupted by telephone calls and the idyls of Virgil’s husbandmen. And yet a kinship exists in the reality of scenes and people that are in both.

What is it that makes Robert Frost’s people like Wordsworth’s or Burns’ people and unlike Crabbe’s or Goldsmith’s people? In the poetry of the eighteenth century we walk down a laneway and cross a field and come to a place that we judge at once, saying, “It is horrible that they had to put up that workhouse, or that they had to level the cottage.” And then we hear a story that is exciting and impressive, and the person or people that the story is told about become familiar to us — as familiar as a brother, or a schoolmate, or a teacher. But Wordsworth’s or Burns’ people can never be familiar to us in that way. They can be no more familiar to us than we can be familiar to ourselves. And Robert Frost’s people, with the scene they move in, have the same sort of inaccessible life.

His fields with their stone-fences, his pastures with their apple trees, his frame houses, have a character of their own. And he can give character to inanimate things — to an unlived-in cottage, to the neglected wood-pile that warms “the frozen swamp . . . with the slow, smokeless burning of decay.” A wall has some undiscovered enemy, as we know when we read one of his poems; and as he plods and labors after the explanation, we get some hint of an earthly mystery. Robert Frost has made no obvious innovation in verse-technique. He has made a

certain featureless blank-verse his own; using this verse, his men and women who obviously have little eloquence, can reach to a speech that has beauty and tragic power. I should like to quote from his dramatic idyls "The Death of the Hired Man," "A Servant to Servants," "The Self-seeker," in "North of Boston"; and "The Home Stretch," and "Snow" in "Mountain Interval," but isolated passages do not show the power that is in these poems. Instead I shall quote one of the short poems, not in blank-verse, from Mr. Frost's latest book, "Mountain Interval."—

THE GUM GATHERER

There overtook me and drew me in
To his down-hill, early morning stride,
And set me five miles on my road
Better than if he had had me ride,
A man with a swinging bag for load
And half the bag wound round his hand.
We talked like barking above the din
Of water we walked along beside.
And for my telling him where I'd been
And where I lived in mountain land
To be coming home the way I was,
He told me a little about himself.
He came from higher up in the pass
Where the grist of the new-beginning brooks
In blocks split off the mountain mass —
And hopeless grist enough it looks
Ever to grind to soil for grass.
(The way it is will do for moss).
There he had built his stolen shack.
It had to be a stolen shack
Because of the fears of fire and loss

That trouble the sleep of lumber folk:
 Visions of half the world turned black
 And the sun shrunken yellow in smoke.
 We know who when they come to town
 Bring berries under the wagon seat,
 Or a basket of eggs between their feet;
 What this man brought in a cotton sack
 Was gum, the gum of the mountain spruce.
 He showed me lumps of the scented stuff
 Like uncut jewels, dull and rough.
 It comes to market golden brown;
 But turns to pink beneath the teeth.

I told him this is a pleasant life
 To set your breast to the bark of trees
 That all your days are dim beneath,
 And reaching up with a little knife,
 To loose the resin and take it down.
 And bring it to market when you please.

America to-day is lucky enough to have in these a company of poets whose names sound a challenge. There are other names, of course, and they are by no means secondary. But the poets named here — Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Edwin Arlington Robinson are the ones whose banners wave over the field.

Is any one of them the heir of Whitman? No. Whitman's heir has not yet been born. The poets named have an idiom of their own — an idiom that in no way comes near Whitman's. They have a power which comes out of a discovery which is marked in English and in Irish poetry — the discovery of local life, and that which made John Masefield and J. M. Synge has made too Edgar Lee Mas-

ters, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay and Robert Frost. These poets, with Amy Lowell and Edwin Arlington Robinson, have lifted American poetry away from the academic, which in America is always the Colonial. America may have to wait as long for the heir of Whitman as England had to wait for the heir of Chaucer, and there may be as much of growth and change between. That change and growth must eventuate in the emergence of America as a full nationality. Her nationality has been a political one, but it is now becoming an intellectual one and the poets of to-day are the signs of, and the help to a full nationality.

PADRAIC COLUM.

The Literary Capital of the United States

HOWEVER largely New York may bulk in the imagination of Europe or in the sight of those Americans who hang upon the front and rear edges of the materialistic conception of history, it ceased long ago to hold any leadership in that department of the national life of the republic which has to do with beautiful letters, or even to bear a part of any solid consequence therein. There is no longer a New York school of writers, as there was in Irving's day, and in Poe's, and even in Whitman's and Mark Twain's; there are, indeed, not more than two or three New York writers in practice to-day who are worthy of serious consideration at all. Scarcely a book of capital importance to the national literature has come out of the town for a generation. Nearly every work of genuine and arresting originality published in the United States during that time, nearly every work authentically representative of the life and thought of the American people, from George Ade's "Fables in Slang," to Edgar Lee Masters's "The Spoon River Anthology," and from Frank Norris's "McTeague" to Theodore Dreiser's "Sister Carrie," has been put together in the hinterland and by a writer innocent of metropolitan influence.

The phenomenon, so far as I know, is unique. It is impossible to imagine saying that of London, or of

Paris, or of Berlin, or even of such somnolent and second-rate capitals as Christiania and Berne. But New York itself is unique. Alone among the great cities of the world it has no definite intellectual life, no body of special ideals and opinions, no aristocratic attitudes. Even the common marks of nationality are few and faint; one half wonders, observing its prodigious crowds and noting their lethargic reactions, if it is actually American at all. Huge, Philistine, self-centered, ignorant and vulgar, it is simply a sort of free port, a Hansa town, a place where the raw materials of civilization are received, sorted, baled, and reshipped. In all the fine arts it is a mere wholesaler, and vastly less the connoisseur than the auctioneer. It has in Central Park the western world's largest storehouse of artistic fossils and mummies, real and fraudulent, good and bad — and yet it seldom, if ever, produces a picture worth looking at. Its peculiarly obnoxious social pushers, Christian and Jew, pour out millions for music every year — and yet even Philadelphia has a better orchestra. It prints four-fifths of the books of the nation and nine-tenths of its magazines — and yet the salient men among its native authors are Robert W. Chambers, Owen Johnson, and James Montgomery Flagg.

Life buzzes and coruscates on Manhattan Island, but the play of ideals is not there. The New York spirit, for all the gaudy pretentiousness of the town, is a spirit of timidity, of regularity, of safe mediocrity. The typical New Yorker, whether artist or mere trader, feels the heavy hand of the capitalistic *bourgeoisie* upon him at all times. He is always

looking over his shoulder furtively, in fear that he may have done something that is not approved, and so brought down upon himself some inexplicable penalty. Here are the great rewards, but here also are the inviolable taboos. The individual, facing that relentless regimentation, is afraid to be himself. Above all, he is afraid to be an American. The town is shoddily cosmopolitan, second-rate European, extraordinarily cringing, a sort of international Jenkins.

The artist arriving from the provinces is confronted at once by that alarmed orderliness, that fear of ideas. If he is still young and full of gas and able to take a chance, he commonly throws himself gallantly into Greenwich Village, the tawdry Latin Quarter of the town — only to find presently that Greenwich Village has been regimented too, that its revolts are artificial and empty, that commercial Jews behind the door pull its wires. But if, as is more likely, he comes in with a bit of sound work behind him, and is eager to get firm earth under him, then his descent follows more swiftly. A subtle something wars upon the elements that make him what he is. His ideas are delicately flattened out. He learns to do things as they should be done. New York swarms with such wrecks of talents — men who arrived with one or two promising books behind them, and are now highly respectable inmates of publishers' bordellos.

But the United States, for all that, occasionally produces a good book. Now and then it even penetrates to Europe — Dreiser's "Sister Carrie," the Masters' "Anthology," London's "The Call of the

Wild." More often it is hauled up by the Atlantic — Willa Cather's "My Antonia," Sherwood Anderson's "Winesburg, Ohio," Carl Sandburg's "Chicago Poems," Cabell's "The Cream of the Jest." Where do they come from? Not from New York: it produces nothing, as we have seen. Not from Boston: it is as tragically dead as Alexandria or Padua. Not from Philadelphia: it is an intellectual slum. Not from San Francisco: its old life and color are gone, and the Methodists, Baptists and other such vermin of God now dominate it. Not from Washington, or St. Louis, or New Orleans, or Baltimore: they are simply flabby and degraded villages. Nay, from none of these, but from Chicago! — Chicago the unspeakable and incomparable, at once the most hospitably cosmopolitan and the most thoroughly American of American cities: —

"Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads, and the Nation's Freight Handler; "

...
"Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth,
half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool
Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads, and
Freight Handler."

In Chicago there is the mysterious something that makes for individuality, personality, charm; in Chicago a spirit broods upon the face of the waters. Find a writer who is indubitably an American in every pulse-beat, an American who has something new and peculiarly American to say and who says it in an unmistakably American way, and nine times

out of ten you will find that he has some sort of connection with the gargantuan abattoir by Lake Michigan — that he was bred there, or got his start there, or passed through there in the days when he was young and tender.

It is, indeed, amazing how steadily a Chicago influence shows itself when the literary ancestry and training of present-day American writers are investigated. The brand of the sugar-cured ham seems to be upon all of them. With two exceptions, there is not a single American novelist of the younger generation — that is, a serious novelist, a novelist deserving a civilized reader's notice — who has not sprung from the Middle Empire that has Chicago for its capital. I nominate the two exceptions at once: Abraham Cahan, Lithuanian Jew, always vastly more Russian than American, and James Branch Cabell, last survivor of the old aristocracy of the South. All the rest have come from the Chicago palatinate: Dreiser, Anderson, Miss Cather, Mrs. Watts, Tarkington, Wilson, Herrick, Patterson, even Churchill. It was Chicago that produced Henry B. Fuller, the pioneer of the modern American novel. It was Chicago that inspired and developed Frank Norris, its first practitioner of genius. And it was Chicago that produced Dreiser, undoubtedly the greatest artist of them all.

The astounding literary productivity of Indiana, the most salient phenomenon of latter-day American literature, is largely ascribable to the influence of the inland capital by the lake. The limits of the city run almost to the Indiana frontier: the youth of the state turns to it instinctively; it as plainly dominates

the energy and aspiration of all that fertile region as Boston dominates the six states of New England. From Ade to Dreiser nearly all the bright young Indianians have gone to Chicago for a semester or two, and not only the Indianians, but also the youngsters of all the other Middle Western States. It has drawn them in from their remote wheat-towns and far-flung railway junctions, and it has given them an impulse that New York simply cannot match — an impulse toward independence, toward honesty, toward a peculiar vividness and *naïveté* — in brief, toward the unaffected self-expression that is at the bottom of sound art. New York, when it lures such a recruit eastward, makes a pliant conformist of him, and so ruins him out of hand. But Chicago, however short the time it has him, leaves him irrevocably his own man, with a pride sufficient to carry through a decisive trial of his talents.

What lies at the bottom of all this, I dare say, is the elemental curiosity of a simple and somewhat ignorant people — the *naïve* delight of hog butchers, freight handlers, the stackers of wheat, in the grand clash and clatter of ideas. New York affects a superior sophistication, and in part it is genuine; Boston is already senile; Philadelphia is too stupid to be interested. But in Chicago there is an eagerness to hear and see, to experience and experiment. The town is colossally rich; it is ever-changing; it yearns for distinction. The new-comers who pour in from the wheatlands want more than mere money; they want free play for their prairie energy; they seek more imaginative equivalent for the stupendous activity that they were bred to. It is thus a superb

market for merchants of the new. And in particular it is a superb market for the merchant whose wares, though new, have a familiar air — which is to say, on the æsthetic plane — for the sort of art that is recognizably national in its themes and its idioms, and combines a Yankee sharpness of observation with a homely simplicity — the sort of art that one finds in a novel by Dreiser or a poem by Sandburg — the only sort that stands free of imitation and is absolutely American.

For such originality Chicago has a perennial welcome, and where the welcome is, there the guests are to be found. Go back twenty or thirty years, and you will scarcely find an American literary movement that did not originate under the shadow of the stockyards. In the eighteen-nineties New York turned its eyes toward England, but Chicago had *Savoy*s of its own, and at least one publishing house that grandly proclaimed the doom of the old order, and trotted out its Fullers and Mary MacLanes, and imported Ibsen and Maeterlinck, then as strange as Heliogabalus. The new poetry movement is thoroughly Chicagoan; the majority of its chief poets are from the Middle West; *Poetry*, the organ of the movement, is published in Chicago. So with the little theater movement. Long before it was heard of in New York, it was firmly on its legs in Chicago. And to support these various reforms and revolts, some of them already of great influence, others abortive and quickly forgotten, there is in Chicago a body of critical opinion that is unsurpassed for discretion and intelligence in America. The New York newspapers, in the main, employ third-

rate journalistic hacks as dramatic critics, and their book reviews are ignorant and ridiculous. But in Chicago there is an abundance of sound work in both fields, and even the least of the newspapers makes a palpable effort to be honest and well-informed. . . .

So much for the Chicagoiad. Lying out there where the prairie runs down to the Great Lakes lies the real capital of the United States. It is overgrown, it is oafish, it shows many of the characters of the upstart and the boulder, but under its surface there is a genuine earnestness, a real interest in ideas, a sound curiosity about the prodigal and colorful life of the people of the republic. The literature of the country, at the moment, is in a state bordering upon paralysis. The war greatly augmented its chronic imitativeness; worse, it greatly strengthened the Puritan machinery for putting down intellectual experiment and enterprise; the statute books are heavy to-day with ferociously repressive laws, and many of them bear harshly on the man of letters. But men of high hope look for a reaction toward freedom in ideas, and, what is more, toward a sane and self-respecting nationalism. If it ever comes, it will not come from New York: New York is too timorous. It will come, I think, from Chicago.

H. L. MENCKEN.

Philosophy in 'America

IN philosophy as well as in law and literature, the United States have remained British colonies. This does not mean that the gates of intellectual America have been completely shut to French and German thought. The community of western civilization, which found in Latin its common tongue, has never been completely broken up; and it is doubtful whether the philosophic mind or genius can ever be entirely nationalized. But the ties of a common language and community of traditions have undoubtedly withstood a Declaration of Independence, two wars, and an unprecedented influx of foreign peoples. Even after our graduate schools had been organized on German models and a large number of those who wished to qualify as teachers had deemed it necessary to take their Ph.D. in Germany, our prevailing philosophic modes did not deviate much from the fashions followed in Great Britain. Our most influential thinkers like Fiske, James, Dewey, and even Royce, have been brought up in the tradition set by Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Mill: and where German influence is undeniable, it has largely come to us through the mediation of British thinkers, such as Coleridge, Hamilton, T. H. Green, Bosanquet, and Bradley. The result is that one can pass from the pages of our philosophical reviews to those of British publications without noticing any general

difference except perhaps a somewhat higher standard of philosophic workmanship prevailing in the latter. The greater maturity of British philosophic writings can partly be explained by the external conditions which in the United States are unfavorable for long-sustained and deliberate philosophic composition. With few notable exceptions, such as W. M. Salter, H. R. Marshall, and C. A. Strong, our philosophic writers are all professional teachers who are always under some official or moral pressure to publish, even though their long schedules of routine teaching, heavy administrative duties, and inadequate pay, do not leave them much leisure or freedom of mind for philosophic thinking, reading and writing.

The recent publication of Mr. Kemp Smith's magnificent "Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason" (1918), written, if not perhaps entirely conceived in Princeton University, serves to remind us that while British influence in our literature has been predominantly English and in the realm of our common law almost exclusively so, in philosophy the Scottish influence has been out of all proportion to the numerical strength of the Scottish people. The natural or common-sense realism of the school of Thomas Reid was introduced in Princeton by President Witherspoon, a Scottish immigrant who became one of the signers of our Declaration of Independence. It spread in the beginning of the nineteenth century until it became the predominant philosophy in America — remaining so up to about 1890, when James McCosh died at Princeton, Francis Bowen at Harvard, and Noah Porter at Yale.

Many reasons can be assigned for this peculiar phenomenon — the superior Scottish experience in, and aptitude for, intellectual controversy; the natural kinship between Presbyterian theology and that of Calvinistic New England; the decay of intellectual traditions in the South through the economic decline of the older seaboard aristocracy; and, not least, the readiness with which the "philosophy of common sense" could be adopted for purposes of dogmatic teaching. Being entirely free from any subtleties or unorthodox views as to the nature of the material world, the soul, or God, it could easily be taught in dogmatic form, and students could readily recite on it. The social demands which shape educational systems have made the American college much more like a Scotch college than anything on the Oxford model; i. e., it has aimed to give somewhat elementary instruction in a number of subjects to a great many, rather than intensive training to a select class. Philosophy was thus originally taught — usually by the president of the college who was an ordained minister — as a part of Christian apologetics in the training of Christian citizens. For while Church and State have been separated since the end of the eighteenth century, the churches have retained real control, even over colleges that are not avowedly denominational.

The last decade of the nineteenth century, however, witnessed a rapid expansion of the American educational system and a transformation of our leading colleges into universities. This naturally created a demand for teachers more technically equipped, even if more secular. The teaching of

existence of an absolute or eternal self as a knower; and (3) dualists like Rogers, Lovejoy, Pratt and Drake who, though they adhere rigidly to the ordinary distinction between subject and object, yet in many ways follow the idealistic analysis of knowledge. Some years ago, George Howison and Thomas Davidson represented a vigorous and pungent form of pluralistic or personal idealism in which the whole universe appeared as a democracy or republic of free spirits. But they seem to have left no direct disciples. C. M. Bakewell of Yale who was closely associated with both of these men seems now a devoted follower of Royce — though it should be added that in Royce's later thought, pluralism rather than monism is emphasized, and community rather than the Absolute Spirit.

It is usual to regard both James and Dewey as pragmatists, and doubtless their agreement is profound and significant; yet, in some respects, they are temperamentally at the opposite poles of the philosophic sphere. While both have their roots in British utilitarianism, and both follow Peirce in asserting that the meaning of any truth is to be found in its consequences, James insists that these consequences must be particulars, while Dewey insists that the process of knowing must be practical. Dewey and his followers are essentially moralists, interested in philosophy as a help to conduct in bettering or reforming the world. James is a spiritualist, interested in what constitutes well-being rather than well-doing. Dewey glorifies the function of the intellect in the transformation of reality: James trusts more to intuition as a revelation of reality.

Thus to James, pragmatism is a method whereby the values of the old supernaturalism may still be maintained, while Dewey's pragmatism or instrumentalism is a method for eliminating such concepts as God, freedom, and immortality which he claims have outlived their value as sanctions. Philosophy henceforth must devote itself to aid in transforming our empirical world.

Nearly all American pragmatists now are followers of Dewey, who is thus the only American to have founded a new philosophical school. The number and the contagious enthusiasm of his disciples is continually increasing. The recent volume of co-operative studies entitled "Creative Intelligence" (1917) gives a fair idea of the achievement as well as the programme of his school, though one of the studies, that by Dr. H. M. Kallen, leans more on Santayana than on Dewey. Though Dewey himself disowns the intention, the Chicago School is in fact distinctly hostile to purely theoretic philosophy, to the satisfaction of idle curiosity or rational wonder for its own sake. The intellect is to illumine various needs and has no separate needs of its own. But that one can sympathize with pragmatism and yet not forego interest in metaphysical or speculative philosophy has recently been brilliantly shown by J. E. Boodin's "Realistic Universe" (1917).

At the beginning of this century the prevailing Lockean dogma that the immediate object of knowledge is always an idea of our own, began to be vigorously assailed both in England and in America. Though priority in this respect belongs to Mr. G. E.

Moore of Trinity, the American pioneers of this movement, Woodbridge, Montague and Perry, seem to have been independently determined in their course — Perry, through his analysis of the inadequacy of Royce's claim that the idealistic position has been definitely proved; Montague, through considerations which appear in the *Natural Realism* of Thomas Case; and Woodbridge, through the rejection of the Cartesian tradition that the mind is an independent substance or bare spectator of material nature. In insisting on a return to the Aristotelian notion of the mind as a psyche, the form or function of an organized body responding to its environment, he believed himself to be also in agreement with the deliverance of modern physics and biology, which indicate that consciousness is an outgrowth of life which has been gradually evolved on a globe originally incapable of bearing it.

Woodbridge is one of the few Americans to insist that metaphysics or philosophy of nature is of greater or more primary importance than psychology or epistemology. The Lockean argument that we must examine the mind as an instrument of knowledge before we can study the nature of things known he rejects as fallacious since we cannot indulge in any inquiry as to the nature of knowledge without assuming that some things are already known. The question how knowledge in general is possible does not explain anything in particular; e. g., why the flowers bloom in the spring.

Woodbridge is one of the many instances of American scholars and philosophers swallowed up by the great Moloch of American university administra-

tion; but the neo-realistic movement of which he has been the pioneer has flourished, thanks partly to the powerful support from the mathematical logic of Bertrand Russell. Indeed, since the publication of the "New Realism" (1912) by Marvin, Perry, Spaulding, Montague, Holt, and Pitkin, no American school has been more energetic. Marvin's "Introduction to Metaphysics" and his "History of European Philosophy," Spaulding's "New Nationalism," Perry's "Present Tendencies of Philosophy," Holt's "Concept of Consciousness," and "The Freudian Wish," as well as the periodical contributions of Montague, Pitkin, and McGilvary form a body of writings not paralleled during the same period by any other school. Holt, in particular, has been effective in transforming neo-realism from a mere protest against the idealistic theory of knowledge into a positive doctrine of neutral monism, holding that both mental and physical complexes ultimately consist of neutral logical elements.

When we turn from the problem of knowledge and related psychological issues, to general metaphysics or to the more special philosophical sciences, such as logic, ethics, philosophy of history, etc., there is comparatively little to report. In the past the history of philosophy occupied a large part of our attention, and the Cornell School, headed by Creighton, Thilly, Hammond and Albee still attach great importance to such studies. But the sum of our achievement in this field is not to be compared with such work as that of Zeller, Gomperz, Hareau, Dietrich, Benn, Whitaker, Burnett or A. E. Taylor. Still, one can mention Lovejoy's studies on the his-

tory of evolution, Albee on utilitarianism, Husik on medieval philosophy and Reilly on early American philosophy, as notable and certainly useful contributions. Sheldon's recent book, "The Strife of Systems" (1918), while just and accurate in its estimate and analysis of contemporary philosophical systems, including Thomism, is primarily metaphysical rather than historical in its interest. Carefully applying the principles of identity and diversity, of external and internal relations, to the diverse systems, the author has undoubtedly made the most important recent contributions to the neglected field of metaphysics.

In the field of logic proper the work inaugurated by Chas. Peirce, the most original American philosopher, is now generally recognized as epoch-making. Royce's contributions in this field may perhaps prove a more enduring monument than his better known books. His pupils, C. I. Lewis of California, and H. M. Sheffer of Harvard, are actively continuing this work. Lewis's "Survey of Symbolic Logic" (1919) is one of the few recent publications of which American scholarship can well be proud.

In the field of ethics, Felix Adler's "Ethical Philosophy of Life" (1918) is, whatever one may think of its Kantian background, certainly a thought-provoking and soul-stirring book of a unique character. Dewey's "Democracy and Education" sums up his philosophy in its practical applications and incidentally illumines some of the dark corners in his theoretic views.

No account of American philosophy should fail to mention the works of Santayana, especially his "Life

of Reason," the most distinctive systematic treatise on philosophy that America has produced. But the limits of our space will not permit justice to this magnificent work. It must be remarked, however, that its systematic neglect is one of the most instructive facts about American philosophy.

This article deals with technical philosophy in America rather than with the philosophy of the American people. If the latter be a real entity it has had remarkably little to do with the former. A country that has had a political experience unique in the world's history, has, up to very recently, produced almost nothing original and important in the field of professed political philosophy. No country has more professional teachers of philosophy and proportionately fewer readers of philosophic literature in the general public. If the Danish philosopher Kirkgaard be right in his contention that we live forward and think backward, we can say that America has been too busy building up a new continent to change its ancient habits of thought. So far as a cloistered observer can tell, the great mass of the American people are either absorbed in questions of an immediately practical bearing, or else in religious thought of a traditionally pietistic character. If the tired strenuous business man takes to philosophy in his leisure moments, he is most likely to take up with the New Thought movement, which also interests his more leisured wife. This diluted theosophy or neo-platonism is actually the most popular philosophy in America. It shows results. It brings to men and women solace, comfort and success, and satisfies in a quasi-intellectual way the yearning for the

Beyond which is ever the Nemesis of worldliness. If the reader is inclined to scoff at and ignore the genuine human service which this New Thought is rendering, I hasten to recommend to him the "History of the New Thought Movement," edited by Horatio Dresser, who is a Harvard Ph.D., an orthodox professor of philosophy, and the author of books which have probably sold in larger numbers than those of Santayana, Royce and Dewey.

Since the war, our philosophic periodicals have been devoting a larger amount of space to questions of social philosophy, but so long as our philosophic training is so inadequate in its preparation for the scientific handling of masses of facts, we are not likely to produce startling results. Our teachers of economics, sociology and political science have been working in the main on the basis of the German historical philosophy, but the background of popular American economic, political, and legal discussion is still dominated by our traditional eighteenth-century individualism or natural law philosophy. The writings of Roscoe Pound, Dean of the Harvard Law School, offer perhaps the best promise of a genuinely modern contribution to social philosophy.

From the point of view of Western or European culture, America has not as yet produced a philosopher as influential as was Gibbs in the realm of physics or Lester Ward in the realm of sociology. Though Ward, and even Gibbs, may well be counted among philosophers, this can be done only by disregarding the unmistakable tendency to separate technical philosophy entirely from physical and social

theory. But James, Dewey, and Baldwin in the field of psychology and education, and Chauncey Wright, C. S. Peirce, Royce and Santayana in the field of logic and metaphysics, are names which can glorify any country. The stress of recent events has not brought forth in America a thinker as clear, radical, and courageous as Bertrand Russell; nor have we a philosopher as pre-eminent as Bradley, whose silence on the burning issues of the war is a rebuke to those who forget that even in times of great passion it is not meet for the philosopher to add to the torrents of hasty words.

MORRIS R. COHEN.

The Recent American Novel

IT is interesting to search a recent volume of English critical articles, Mr. Robert Lynd's charming "Old and New Masters," and not find in it one American novelist. Henry James is there, but to Henry James the United States was an æsthetic purgatory from which he ascended to Europe. He is Mr. Lynd's only American, and he no more belongs to his native country than Mr. Conrad to Poland. What makes the omission interesting is not at all the critic's obliviousness, if it is obliviousness, but the fact that this low visibility should be so much a matter of course. In the English eye the American novel is not yet significant. It exists. For the curious everything exists. But it has not taken on a very distinct and salient character. More, undoubtedly, than the novels of Canada and Australia, or, for that matter, the novels of Jamaica and Malta; but not immeasurably more. And it cannot be explained by saying that critics like Mr. Lynd are too hard to please. He at least has a place for James Elroy Flecker and for Mr. Cunninghame Graham.

This failure of the American novel to leap the critical Atlantic, observable elsewhere than in Mr. Lynd, may partly be accounted for by the habit of English readers. Even genius has had its difficulties about arriving from Scandinavia and Russia, or crossing the Irish Channel or the Straits of Dover.

But granted the polite stare that meets the outsider, and the sedate readers behind it, there are certain peculiarities in the nature of the American novel which indicate to some degree its comparative failure to define itself.

The chief of these peculiarities, as many see them, is (in the jargon of the psycho-analyst) an inferiority complex. This neurotic sense of inferiority does not directly affect the great thriving class of fiction-manufacturers which is common to England and the United States. Novel-makers like Robert W. Chambers, George Barr McCutcheon, Gene Stratton Porter, Owen Johnson, the Pollyanna lady, Harold McGrath, Thomas Dixon, and the incredible Harold Bell Wright, are simply exponents of a form of business enterprise to be grouped with the jam and pickle business of Crosse and Blackwell, that has nothing to do with art. Even men like Rupert Hughes and Samuel Merwin and Meredith Nicholson, who understand fiction as an art, are not free from the taint of business enterprise in arranging their creations. But the American novelist as artist, the man of æsthetic significance, is subordinated in a much subtler respect. He is the victim, ill or convalescent, of what Mr. Santayana has perfectly termed the "genteel tradition"; and this tradition is the outcome of a national timidity — a sense of æsthetic inferiority.

If one were to go to the source of this tradition, one would have to analyze Puritanism as well as Colonialism; and nothing of America's ungracious religiousness and provincialism, succeeded by commercial hurry and bustle, could be left out. But

these are only indirect and indeed debatable contributing factors, and it is to the influence of the American college and the critics bred by the American college, that the genteel tradition is more directly to be ascribed. At one time, the period of the transcendentalists, there was a possibility that a culture might be formed for the nation which would permit the partial emancipation of the American spirit in the severe and almost forbidding presence of classical culture. But before this civilized and civilizing culture was established, the Civil War came, and with it the expansion of the railroads and the incursion of the immigrants. A hasty national homogeneity was then quickly developed — of rapid transit, cheap newspapers, standardized clothing, national advertising, big business, hotels, theaters, summer resorts, "mail order" houses, good plumbing, universal tooth-brushes, Ford cars and Evinrude engines. This machine-process homogeneity, with telegraph and telephone and rotary press and moving picture to speed it on, outran the most desperate of efforts toward cultivation. To any one who has seen them, the New York elevated railway structures are alone enough to indicate the untutored energy which the transcendentalists had failed to harness. It was energy, however, that really needed direction from the æsthetic monitors of the country, or if not direction, then impregnation. But these monitors, chillily comparing the barbarism around them to the classicism across the ocean, had little better to offer than repression.

In view of the immense prestige of English fiction in America through the latter part of the nineteenth

century, with American professors and critics and editors maintaining this prestige, the Atlantic seaboard was frigid to native fiction. The New England short story grew, bare and wind-beaten and close to the ground, but only William Dean Howells, from Ohio, could write an eager assured story like "A Boy's Town," or a profoundly illuminating version of current life like "The Rise of Silas Lapham." There were competent storytellers North and South, and a few really skillful and delightful ones, but outside Mr. Howells, the novel in the East was thinly derivative. It would have been hard in any case, I suppose, to devise against a shifting American background such rooted and rounded histories of men and women as the nineteenth-century taste in novels demanded. To give to American society the livingness that American readers were finding in Turgenev and Meredith, and Tolstoi and Hardy, called for something not yet quite sure in common consciousness — American society itself. For that reason the one clear success, though at first purely popular, was Mark Twain's, whose country and whose rich expression of it was unlike anything European.

At the head of respectable novelists at present stands Winston Churchill, a robust exponent of the "genteel tradition." With him, fresher and less platitudinous, are to be reckoned Ernest Poole, author of "The Harbor," H. K. Webster, author of "The Great Adventure," William Allen White, who wrote "A Certain Rich Man," and Henry Sydnor Harrison, of "Queed." Ellen Glasgow, Mary Johnston of "The Long Roll," and the mellifluous James Lane Allen, are representatives of the same

class. Judge Robert Grant, who wrote "The Chippendales," is rather more platitudinous than Winston Churchill and decidedly more fatigued. Mrs. Wharton is also fatigued, but for all her low temperature and the social furs with which she clothes it, she is not without high distinction. Not so distinguished is Mrs. Katherine Fullerton Gerould, yet her short stories, "Vain Oblations," and others, exhibit a fine talent marred by snobbishness. Much more important, though unwieldy and clayey, is the Easterner, Robert Herrick, who wrote "The Common Lot" and "Together," in Chicago. All of this group, however, may be said to be subordinate as artists. Not one of them is so affluent in nature or so radiant in inspiration as to overcome the heavy hand of Puritanic repression or the cold hand of gentility.

But beyond the Alleghany Mountains one notes a different æsthetic spirit. Whatever individuality is to be found in the American novel, at all comparable with that of the Russian or the French novel of yesterday, has been won by men and women with the outlook of the pioneer. In many cases theirs has been less a lyrical naturalness than a violent revolution against gentility, but even where it has been a conscious revolt it has had something in it of the verve of a new society, a society not digging deep into its human soil but at least superficially excited and strenuous in action.

The novel is, first of all, the personality's, but is it by accident that California bred Jack London and Frank Norris? California is neither colonial nor genteel, and it gave easy birth to "The Octopus,"

Norris's brilliant story of warfare against railroad monopoly, and "McTeague," his magnificent study of an energized brute. Mrs. Atherton is also a Californian and in some sense a free novelist, but not even Jack London, an open-handed man who wrote beyond his literary means, had the primal novelist instinct of Frank Norris.

In and around the newspaper offices of the Middle West, however, has developed that group of American novelists whose experience defied the virus of respectability. The most titantic is Theodore Dreiser, much more fuscous than Frank Norris, but also much more obedient to that rude experience of life which the moralist and the leader-writer are always asking the writer of fiction to betray. "Sister Carrie" remains perhaps his best novel. David Graham Phillips, another man from Indiana, had persistence and strength, but no pliancy and no inflection of tone. He dilated rather than imagined. Brand Whitlock, now ambassador to Belgium, wrote several excellent novels of politics and prison life, "The Thirteenth District" being a quietly veristic study of the profession of machine-politics. Upton Sinclair, an Easterner who has moved west by natural law, showed in "The Jungle" and "Love's Pilgrimage" a more extreme form of naturalistic revolt than any of his contemporaries, but ungoverned by any real sense of the disinterestedness of art. A late comer is Sherwood Anderson, author of "Windy McPherson's Son," "Marching Men," and "Winesburg, Ohio"—a naturalist with a skirl of music haunting him. And another is the Jewish editor, Abraham Cahan, whose

"David Levinsky" is a crude but vehemently honest report of the processes of the melting pot.

Because most of these men were newspaper writers, and consequently in the thick of American activity, they naturally resisted and resented the genteel tradition. But being newspaper men, to a certain extent bored outsiders as regards the regular run of life and cynical insiders as regards character and reputation, and yet credulous insiders as regards the gigantesque and the spectacular immediately surrounding them, their revolt against gentility has been open to æsthetic attack from the old guard. Yet it must be said that those whose spirit was conceivably finer have proved less viable. Henry B. Fuller, whose "The Cliff-Dwellers" and "With the Procession" focussed Chicago so justly and so sensitively twenty years ago, made his escape to Italy and to silence. Booth Tarkington, the romancer from Indiana, has hovered more closely over his era, but has never quite alighted. The same may be said of Hamlin Garland, who wrote "Rose of Dutcher's Coolly" and lately "A Son of the Middle Border," and of Stewart Edward White, whose "The Blazed Trail" is memorable. Two other writers, Miss Willa Cather and James Branch Cabell, are said to have an art all their own, but I have not yet read them.

What is the upshot? A cluster of common associations is accumulating for cultivated Americans, but the upholders of the genteel tradition are still inimical to any except the recognized European accent. The Puritans, on the other hand, resist everything that is not purposeful or edifying. Meanwhile the

men who disregard these prejudices, who face the raw United States with a desperate resolution to subdue it to the novel, have not as yet succeeded indubitably. And, as they struggle, dramatic and narrative energy has poured headlong into the channels of poetry. Edgar Lee Masters, Robert Frost, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, and even Edwin Arlington Robinson, have put into new form those expressions of American reality, or their own reality in terms of America, which in another society might well have found form in fiction. But it is in verse, not in fiction, that young America is seeking to express itself. There are in the United States no such novelists coming up as Beresford, Mackenzie, Swinerton, Miss Richardson, Miss Delafield, Joyce.

But the possibilities of the American novel are still practically untouched. One new development of the novel, the egoistic form of Joyce, may easily invite the men who are repressed in other directions. If the novel can desert the community and the clan, to become the intensive history of personality and personal contacts, then the young American literary artist may quickly make himself at home. But granted that this is a limited possibility, out of the democratic form of the Dreiser novel may come a much deeper and more beautiful expression. The Dreiser novel may be only a chrysalis, preserving the novel until it has conquered not only the gentility but the fear of free individuality which is still the greatest enemy of American art.

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THE END



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